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Hearing Tuesday on vote maps

By CAROL DEMARE Staff writer

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ALBANY -- A reapportionment map is in place for the 39 districts of the Albany County Legislature, but lawmakers will consider comments made Tuesday night at a public hearing.

The new lines, as required by the 2010 census, emerged with four predominantly minority

districts, up one from the current three districts, while the suburbs picked up a district.

"We anticipate people coming from the public and raising good suggestions of how the lines should be," said Legislator Shawn Morse, a Cohoes Democrat and chairman of the Albany County Redistricting Commission.

For instance, he said, it has come to the commission's attention that the village of Voorheesville is cut in half, and that will be looked at. "It was a computer-generated district," he said, done by a special software program designed to draw lines and create a map.

Thomas Marcelle, lawyer for the legislature's minority Republicans, said, after that the 2000 census, Albany Democrats "to keep the same number of seats had to creep into Bethlehem and Guilderland and Colonie."

At least five of the 14 city-based seats had suburbs as part of their district. Marcelle said redistricting was unfair to the suburbs, which were cheated out of the population gains they made 10 years ago.

As a result, with this year's redistricting, Albany went from 14 city seats to 13, and the new seat was drawn in the western part of the county, benefiting primarily Guilderland, he said.

Albany went up in population by 3.6 percent, an increase of 3,412, while Bethlehem grew by 7.4 percent or 2,318 more people. Colonie went up by 2.9 percent, an increase of 2,264, while Guilderland was up 3.7 percent or 1,258.

In making four minority districts, the first district in the city, which includes parts of Bethlehem, will no longer exist as currently configured, Morse said. Lucille McKnight, who currently represents District Two, will have to run for re-election in District One, a new minority district. All 39 lawmakers are up for election in November.

Marcelle acknowledged that some members of the minority community are not pleased with the lines. Several spoke at a public forum before the Legislature meeting last week.



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A minority community leader, Aaron Mair, was involved in a successful civil rights federal lawsuit filed over complaints the last redistricting effort 10 years ago failed to accurately represent minority neighborhoods. He was critical of the new maps last week, particularly finding fault with the commission for having so many lawmakers on it. He said it should have been a "truly independent" group.

The new maps are available for viewing at the Clerk of the County Legislature, Room 710 at 112 State St., the county office building. The hearing begins at 7:15 p.m. in the first floor Cahill Room of the same building.



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